

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 1064

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL MASS MORG PGOV VE
SUBJECT: US-LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS

REF: STATE 306726

1. FOLLOWING ARE EMBASSY'S REPLIES KEYED TO PARA TWO
REFTEL.

A. US TIES WITH THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY ARE NOT
NECESSARY TO MAINTAINING NORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE
GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA. THIS IS A DEMOCRACY AND,
EXCEPT ON CERTAIN SENSITIVE ISSUES, THE CIVILIAN
GOVERNMENT OPERATES FREE OF MILITARY VETO. WITH
RESPECT TO US SECURITY NEEDS, THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY
HAS ONLY A VERY LIMITED CAPABILITY TO PERATE BEYOND
ITS BORDERS. IN RECENT HISTORY IT DID COPE WITH A
MAJOR INTERNAL SECURITY THREAT. THE VENEZUELAN
MILITARY WOULD PROBABLY BE ABLE TO HANDLE A VERY
LIMITED EXTERNAL THREAT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SOME
MAJOR CONFLICT OR MAJOR TENSION THUS FREEING US
FORCES FROM DUTY ELSEWHERE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER,
THAT THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY IS EXTEREMELY IMPORTANT
BECAUSE IT IS ONE OF THE KEY INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS
IN VENEZUELAN SOCIETY THAT SUPPORT DEMOCRACY. FOR
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THIS REASON ALONE IT IS ESPECTIALLY IMPORTANT TO
MAINTAIN GOOD WORKING RELATIONS AND INFLUENCE
WITH THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY. A PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE
OF SUCH INFLUDENCE WOULD BE TO SUPPORT THE IDEA THAT
THE US AND VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES AS INSTITUTIONS
ARE ALMOST ALONE IN THIS HEMISPHERE IN SUPPORTING
DEMOCRACY.

B. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US GOVERNMENT, THE US MILITARY AND INDIVIDUAL US SERVICES WITH THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE BUYING WEAPONS SYSTEMS AND SPARE PARTS FROM THE US AS WELL AS USING THE US AS ITS PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF TRAINING, ADVICE AND DOCTRINE. THERE IS DISMAY AND PREOCCUPATION WITHIN THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY OVER THE RESTRAINTS PLACED ON US SECURITY ASSISTANCE. THEY ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO TRAINING IN THE US AND HAVE RECENTLY COMPLAINED THAT THE INCREASING COSTS OF MILITARY TRAINING IN THE US IS DRIVING THEM TO OTHER (CHIEFLY LATIN AMERICAN) COUNTRIES FOR TRAINING WHERE THE TRAINING IS NOT AS GOOD AND WHERE DEMOCRACY DOES NOT EXIST. RECENTLY, ALSO, SENIOR VENEZUELAN MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY HAVE RECEIVED OFFERS OF TRAINING IN THE SOVIET UNION.

C. BEARING IN MIND THE CONSTRAINTS ON US POLICY, THE MOST EFFECTIVE NEAR AND MID-TERM ACTIONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO MEET THE MUTUAL NEEDS OF THE US AND THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY IS TO FIND A WAY TO OFFER MORE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY EITHER IN THE US OR WITH US MILITARY INSTRUCTORS.

D. VENEZUELA IS A RELATIVELY WEALTHY COUNTRY AND CAN
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PROBABLY BUY WEAPONS SYSTEMS SIMILAR TO THOSE NOT NOW AVAILABLE FROM THE US FROM EUROPEAN OR LATIN AMERICAN SOURCES. THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY, HOWEVER, CONTINUES TO REGARD THE US MILITARY AS THE PREDOMINANT MILITARY FORCE IN THE WORLD, AND, AS SUCH, SEEKS CONTINUED ACCESS TO US TRAINING, DOCTRINE AND ADVICE (PARTICULARLY OPERATIONAL, LOGISTICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE). CLEARLY, THE US CAN SERVE ITS OWN INTERESTS IN MAINTAINING CONTACT AND INFLUENCE WITH THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY THROUGH THE SUPPORT AND ADVICE DESCRIBED IN SUB PARAGRAPH D OF THE REFERENCE. IN ADDITION, SUCH CONTACTS WOULD ALSO SERVE TO PROMOTE THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF REACHING LONG-TERM ARMS AGREEMENT TO LIMIT PURCHASES IN LINE WITH CONGRESSIONAL MANDATED GUIDELINES, AS WELL AS THE MAKE RATIONAL USE OF RESOURCES AND COST EFFICIENT PURCHASES. THERE IS NO QUESTION, HOWEVER, THAT THE AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE WHICH THE US CAN EXERT THROUGH THESE MORE RESTRICTED RELATIONSHIPS IS NOT AS GREAT AS WOULD BE THE CASE IF ARMS TRANSFERS WERE NOT SO LIMITED.

E. THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS,

INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS AND ATTENDANCE AT
US MILITARY SCHOOLS SHOULD NOT BE UNDER ESTIMATED.
THE KINDS OF LINKS MADE UNDER THESE PROGRAMS OFTEN
LAST FOR A LONG TIME AND CAN HAVE A VERY REAL DEAL
TO DO WITH CONTINUED ACCESS TO AND INFLUENCE WITH THE
VENEZUELAN MILITARY, ALTHOUGH IT IS NO SUBSTITUTE
FOR A LESS RESTRICTIVE ARMS SALES POLICY.

F. PROJECTIONS FOR NEAR (FY 1980) AND MID-TERM
(FY 1984) TRENDS IN VENEZUELAN
EXPENDITURES FOR AMRS FROM THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS FOLLOW.
IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THESE MONETARY ESTIMATES ARE
APPROXIMATE AND ALSO DO NOT INCLUDE, IN SOME CASES,
SPECIFIC FIGURES FOR VARIOUS CATEGORIES WHICH ARE NOT AVAILABLE
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TO US.

CATEGORY	(\$ U.S. MILLIONS)	
	FY 1980	FY 1984
AIR MODERNIZATION	.7	1.1
NAVAL MODERNIZATION	.5	2.0
GROUND MOBILITY	3.0	0
COMMAND AND CONTROL	0	0
TRAINING	1.8	2.0

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